

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TUNIS 00534 241234Z POSS DUPE
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 COME-00 EB-08 LAB-04 SIL-01 OPR-02 A-01
SY-05 OC-06 CCO-00 MCT-01 HA-05 /090 W
-----117738 250307Z /41
R 241028Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9675

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, PGOV, TS
SUBJECT: WEEKEND TROUBLES HIGHLIGHT UGTT/GOT MALAISE

1. OVER LAST WEEKEND, CONFRONTATIONAL MOOD APPEARS TO HAVE INTENSIFIED BETWEEN PARTISANS OF UGTT ON ONE HAND, AND GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES AND THEIR PARTY SUPPORTERS ON OTHER. THESE POSTURES SEEM TO HAVE BEEN CATALYZED BY PSD CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING, AT WHICH PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA HIMSELF SPECIFICALLY CRITICIZED UGTT LEADERSHIP AND ITS FOREIGN CONNECTIONS, AND BY EXTRAORDINARY SESSIONS OF UGTT ADOIN-ISTRATIVE COUNCIL AND EXECUTIVE BOARD IN WHICH STRATEGY FOR A "NATIONAL WARNING GENERAL STRIKE" REPORTEDLY IS BEING FORMULATED. (SEPTEL).

2. WEEKEND WAS MARKED BY SPORADIC CONFRONTATION AND VIOLENCE IN VARIOUS CENTERS. IN COASTAL CITY OF SOUSSE, FIGHTING BROKE OUT WITHIN UGTT HALL BETWEEN BACKERS OF NATIONAL LEADERSHIP AGAINST SUPPORTERS OF LOCAL OFFICERS WHO RECENTLY RESIGNED IN PROTEST AGAINST UGTT HEADQUARTERS' POLICIES AND ACTIONS. ACCORDING TO PRESS ACCOUNTS, AN ALTERCATION BROKE OUT BETWEEN MEMBERS OF TUNIS-AIR UNION AND "OUTSIDE HECKLERS" DURING A ROUTINE ASSEMBLY IN ONE
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OF THE MEETING ROOMS OF UGTT HEADQUARTERS BUILDING IN TUNIS, SATURDAY, JANUARY 21. SEVERAL INJURIES RESULTED FROM MELEE AND SECRETARYGENERAL HABIB ACHOUR WAS FORCED TO INTERVENE PERSONALLY TO RESTORE ORDER. WE ARE AT-TEMPTING TO CONFIRM INDEPENDENTLY FACTS OF THIS INCIDENT.

3. SATURDAY, JAN. 21, AT 7:00 A.M. ENROUTE TO MEET

WITH A VISITING AMERICAN LABOR LEADER, AN EMBOFF PERSONALLY WITNESSED A CONFRONTATION BETWEEN APPROXIMATELY 150 STRIKERS, AND A SIMILAR NUMBER OF POLICE, AT THE GOVERNMENT'S BUS MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR BARN NEAR TUNIS AIRPORT. STRIKERS HAD STACKED AN "ARSENAL" OF STONES ALONG HIGHWAY FACING MAIN GATE OF FACILITY. SUDDENLY POLICE ARMED WITH SHIELDS, HANDGUNS, AND TEARGAS GRENADES POURCED ACROSS HIGHWAY IN PURSUIT. STRIKERS FANNED OUT OVER OPPOSING OPEN FIELD TAUNTING POLICE AS LATTER HESITATED AND REGROUPED. POLICE FIRED SHOTS AND TEARGAS INTO AIR AND AT RANDOM WITH NO EFFECT. EMBOFF WAS STRUCK BY DEGREE OF RELUCTANCE WHICH POLICE DISPLAYED TO GIVE CHASE AND PHYSICALLY CONFRONT STRIKERS. POLICE RETURNED TO THEIR FANS, MAKING NO CAPTURES.

4. INFORMATION JUST IN THAT UGTT EXECUTIVE BOARD IS SET TO CALL NATIONAL GENERAL STRIKE FOR FRIDAY, JANUARY 27. THIS CALL MAY WELL BE DELAYED OR EVEN CANCELLED AS RESULT CURRENT MEETINGS BETWEEN ACHOUR-KERSTEN (ICFTU) AND NOUIRA-KERSTEN.
MULCAHY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: UNION GOVERNMENT RELATIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 24 jan 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978TUNIS00534
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780036-0788
Format: TEL
From: TUNIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780127/aaaaawno.tel
Line Count: 83
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 23d9a1e0-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3720487
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: WEEKEND TROUBLES HIGHLIGHT UGTT/GOT MALAISE
TAGS: ELAB, PGOV, TS
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/23d9a1e0-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014